The Cleveland Museum of Art

Press Release

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A Passion for Antiquities:
Ancient Art from the Collection of Barbara and Lawrence Fleischman
February 15 - April 23, 1995 (please note new closing date)

In a major international art event, one of the finest private collections in the world of Greek, Etruscan, and Roman art goes on public exhibition at The Cleveland Museum of Art on Wednesday, February 15, and remains on view through Sunday, April 23, 1995 (please note new closing date). **A Passion for Antiquities: Ancient Art from the Collection of Barbara and Lawrence Fleischman** affords people in the Cleveland area a rare opportunity to enjoy extraordinary works of art and to experience the pleasures of astute private collecting.

From a collection of more than 300 objects, dating from 2600 BC to AD 400, Mr. and Mrs. Fleischman and two organizing museums--The J. Paul Getty Museum and The Cleveland Museum of Art--have chosen more than 200 to exhibit. On view will be sculptures in marble and bronze; vessels in bronze, silver, ceramic, and glass; and gold jewelry. Many of these works come from the far reaches of the lands influenced by the ancient centers of Greece, Etruria, and Rome, from Gaul to West Asia to North Africa. Some were made as magnificent gifts for temples, shrines, or graves, but the objects of daily life, in which the Fleischmans take particular delight, are equally compelling as works of art. "Ancient art is created for a visual experience, but it's useful as well as beautiful," Larry Fleischman observes; all of these objects bear him out, offering abundant pleasure for both the eye and the mind.

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Collected over many years and always central in the Fleischmans' private life at home, the works of art are often small enough to be held in one hand, and even the largest ones invite intimate study. The installation in the Museum galleries echoes the intimacy of a private collection while arranging the objects in meaningful chronological and thematic fashion.

Divine gestures, heroic deeds, and human foibles were treated with equal compassion by Greek, Etruscan, and Roman artists and craftsmen. Their powerful images of gods and their sober portraits of citizens or sly, comic representations of clowns and actors range from a 3,500-year-old Cycladic marble head of an idol, so boldly simplified that it could be taken for a modern abstraction, to a realistic portrait of a silversmith that satisfied the Roman impulse to commemorate the dead by depicting them as they were in life. Many works, including a number of painted vases, terracotta figures, and bronzes, reflect the Fleischmans' intense interest in ancient theater.

Some other especially notable works in **A Passion for Antiquities** are:

* A sumptuous bronze vessel inlaid with silver, decorated with exuberant grapevines and a handsome, impudent young satyr, alluding to Dionysos, god of wine and ecstasy, from the late-1st-century Hellenistic world.

* Flamboyant gold earrings with dangling "winged victory" figures, also Hellenistic, of the 3rd-2nd century BC.

* A painted ceramic couple from early-5th-century BC Etruria--a *maenad* and *silenos* (a nymph and a satyr), mythological followers of Dionysos--sweeping along in lively and provocative dance.

* A fresco fragment, probably from the dining room of an elegant 1st-century BC Roman house, in which a graceful young woman stands on a balcony and sips from a shallow drinking cup.

* A fine red-figured vase for perfumed oil called a *lekythos*, attributed to an accomplished South Italian painter of the mid-4th century BC; it depicts the legendary Garden of the Hesperides, where a serpent coils around a tree bearing the famous golden apples of the goddess Hera, which Herakles had to steal as one of his mythic labors.

Arielle P. Kozloff, curator of ancient art at the Cleveland Museum, who has often visited the Fleischmans' collection, says:

> These works of ancient art charmed their way one by one into the home of Barbara and Larry Fleischman--this one because of its humor, that one by its magnificent quality, another because it brings such elegance to a utilitarian object. The collectors' personal touch allows each of us to step thousands of years into the past and imagine what our own lives might have been if we had been the charioteers, the slaves, the wealthy villa owners, the theater goers, and the wool spinners of ancient times.

Dr. Robert P. Bergman, director of The Cleveland Museum of Art, adds:

> Quite simply, the Fleischmans have, in a relatively short period of time, assembled one of the world's premiere private collections of Greek, Etruscan, and Roman antiquities. We are delighted to have the chance to share it with our Cleveland audience and thank Larry and Barbara for giving us the opportunity.

Public programs accompanying the exhibition include a free evening of classical poetry and drama, sponsored jointly by the Museum and the Great Lakes Theater Festival, on Wednesday, February 22, 1995; an ambitious symposium on collecting ancient art, "Acquiring A Passion for Antiquities," brings to Cleveland some of the most notable authorities in the field, including Sir John Boardman, the best-known English-language writer on Greek art, on Friday and Saturday, March 17 and 18, 1995; and lectures, films, gallery talks, free family programs and other events throughout the 9-1/2 weeks of the exhibition. A complete listing of public programs is enclosed.

A catalogue documents the entire Fleischman collection and reproduces in color each object on exhibition (except three works acquired by the Fleischmans after the catalogue was written). It includes an essay by Marion True, Curator of Antiquities at The J. Paul Getty

Museum, and Arielle P. Kozloff, Curator of Ancient Art at The Cleveland Museum of Art, and an essay by Oliver Taplin, distinguished classical historian at Magdalen College, Oxford University. More than a dozen noted specialists in ancient art wrote detailed entries on the objects. The catalogue is available at the Stores of The Cleveland Museum of Art (372 pp, 196 color plates, 290 black-and-white illustrations, $60 cloth) and for reference in the exhibition.

A Passion for Antiquities is organized by The J. Paul Getty Museum, where it opened in October 1994, and cosponsored by The Cleveland Museum of Art. Generous support for the Cleveland showing is provided by the Ohio Arts Council and for educational programs is provided by Shelby White and Leon Levy.

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